WOMEN IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

A PLAN FOR PROGRESS

MARCH 1986

Women's Programs

Hon. Terry Segarty,
Minister Responsible

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A PLAN FOR PROGRESS

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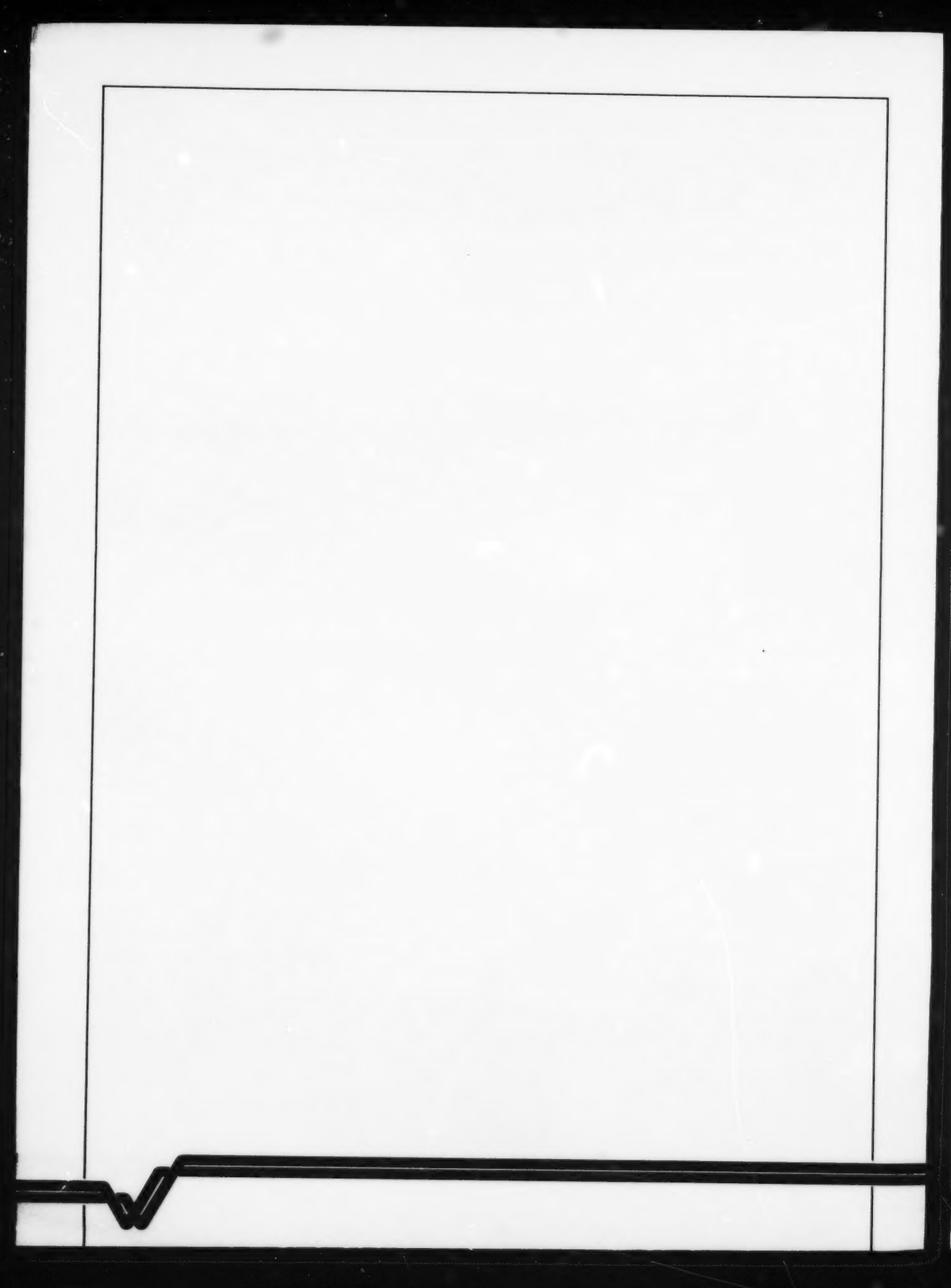


Message From
THE HONOURABLE
W.R. BENNETT, PREMIER
PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

On November 23, 1981, the Government of British Columbia announced the appointment of a Deputy Minister within the Ministry of Labour, with specific responsibility for dealing with women's issues in our province.

Since that time, the Deputy Minister for Women's Programs and her staff have worked effectively to re-affirm this government's commitment to further improve the standing of women in British Columbia today.

Through a process of advocacy, monitoring and data gathering — and in close consultation with government agencies, women's groups and individual women — **A PLAN FOR PROGRESS** has been developed.

Women make up more than fifty percent of our population, and it is with pleasure that I endorse **A PLAN FOR PROGRESS.** This plan will serve as a cornerstone of our efforts to ensure that the women of British Columbia realize their full potential, make a full contribution to our economic development, and enjoy the benefits of that contribution.

Bill Bennett

W.R. Bennett
Premier
Province of British Columbia

Message From

THE HONOURABLE TERRY SEGARTY,
MINISTER OF LABOUR
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
STATUS OF WOMEN AND YOUTH SERVICES

The role of women, and the public understanding of that role has changed dramatically in recent years. While Canadian women have had legal equality in voting rights for decades, the recognition of women's rights to participate fully and equally in all aspects of social, political and economic life has too often lagged behind.

Clearly, changing legislation can address only one aspect of women's needs and concerns. Equally important is change in attitudes by men and women alike, in order to establish in concrete terms those human freedoms and opportunities which in too many cases, have existed only in theory.

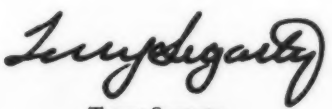
Rights must be exercised to be enjoyed. The increasing willingness of women of all ages to compete for leadership roles in the organizational, professional, labour, business and political realms, and to challenge irrational barriers in non-traditional occupations and pursuits is an extremely encouraging sign of renewed progress.

Government cannot, however, impose new attitudes on society. We can and indeed we must lead by example, updating legislation, and promoting the access of women to opportunities which have been closed to them in the past.

Our approach, and our commitment must be one of cooperation. I believe that by stressing the positive benefits to all British Columbians and all Canadians of enhancing women's self-fulfillment, achievement, and contribution we can make the most rapid, and the most lasting gains.

By emphasizing the benefits we will all share through employing the still largely untapped creative potential of the female majority of our population, apprehension can give way to appreciation and tacit support can be moved to enthusiasm.

As Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, with a strong mandate from our government to advance these aims, I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce to you a **PLAN FOR PROGRESS** which reflects the government's on-going commitment to women in British Columbia. I am also pleased to take this opportunity to express my thanks, my congratulations, and my full support to all those working so tirelessly, whether as professionals or as volunteers to more fully realize the promise of Canadian democracy for women in British Columbia.



Terry Segarty
Minister

Message From
ISABEL A. KELLY
DEPUTY MINISTER,
WOMEN'S PROGRAMS AND
YOUTH SERVICES

Women's Programs was established in June, 1982. Responsibility for the coordination of all government initiatives relating to women's issues lies with the office of the Deputy Minister for Women's Programs.

Through our established mandate Women's Programs:

1. Provides a focal point within the provincial government for input from employers, counsellors, educators, unions, and the general public on issues affecting women.
2. Co-ordinates the development and implementation of government programs and policies to ensure the equal participation of women in the social, economic and political life of British Columbia.
3. Ensures that government, as a major employer, shows leadership in providing equal opportunities for employment and advancement for women in the public service.
4. Represents, through the Minister responsible, women's issues at Cabinet and other senior levels of government.
5. Generates data and conducts research in support of policy initiatives and provides information on a wide variety of issues affecting women.

To carry out this mandate Women's Programs fulfills a leadership, advocacy, monitoring and co-ordinating role on a wide range of issues affecting women.

Within government, Women's Programs staff work closely with all ministries and agencies of government in identifying and analysing issues, and developing policies, programs and legislation to benefit the women of British Columbia. We play a leadership role in advocating improved career opportunities for women in the public service.

On a broader scale, Women's Programs works closely with government officials responsible for women's issues in all provinces, as well as the Government of Canada. We also maintain close links with a wide spectrum of community and women's organizations, institutions and individual women on a variety of issues.

Co-operation between Women's Programs policy and research staff and policy and research sections of all ministries is fundamental to progress. Public information and awareness is facilitated by the communications function provided by Government Information Services.

Women's Programs is pleased to take a leadership role in the further refinement and implementation of **A PLAN FOR PROGRESS.**

Isabel A. Kelly

Isabel A. Kelly
Deputy Minister
Women's Programs

Introduction

The government of British Columbia is committed to improving the overall standing of women in this province. We recognize that for women to achieve full equality of opportunity in all facets of our society much remains to be done. Many issues will require long-term solutions, nevertheless, we believe that a concentrated effort as detailed in **A PLAN FOR PROGRESS,** will result in positive gains.

A co-operative approach, involving all segments of society, is essential if positive changes are to be made. Government can, and will, play a significant role in this proce , and to that end, **A PLAN FOR PROGRESS** has been developed. But a commitment must also come from labour organizations, the business community, school boards, municipalities, Government of British Columbia Crown Corporations, the Federal Government, community groups, and individuals. Social change is not the sole responsibility of government. We must all co-operate to eliminate the attitudinal and institutional barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential and from contributing to the future development of this province.

As part of this government's on-going commitment to women's issues, over the next five years we will:

— Enhance internal and external provincial government programs and mechanisms dealing with women's concerns,

— Require each Ministry to prepare on an annual basis, plans of action relating to women's issues,

— Strengthen the public consultation process in all Ministries with respect to women's issues,

— Continue to monitor provincial legislation for compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,

— Examine all government programs and policies for their potential impact on women,

Additional strategies are outlined in **A PLAN FOR PROGRESS.** With the co-operation of all sectors of our society, we will achieve these goals. Equality for women will create a better and a more productive society for all British Columbians.

As new issues requiring government action emerge, Women's Programs will bring them to the attention of the appropriate Ministry.

Women Outside the Public Service

Target Groups

Women's issues are of concern to all women, and to all of society. Working towards the improvement of the standing of women in this province will benefit all British Columbians. There are, however, certain groups of women whose needs are more pressing than others and whose specific problems must be addressed on a priority basis. These include:

— Battered women and other victims of domestic violence,

— Disabled women,

— Elderly women,

— Girls of school age (with specific reference to career counselling),

— Homeworkers,

— Immigrants, native women and women from visible minority groups,

— Single parents,

— Women in business (eg. access to credit),

— Women living on inadequate incomes or in economic hardship,

— Women on income assistance,

— Women seeking re-training; women re-entrants to the labour force.

Goals of the Government of British Columbia

Economic Independence

To develop and implement comprehensive strategies that make economic self-sufficiency fully available for women in British Columbia. Priority will be given to:

— increasing accessible and improved child care arrangements;
— improving access to adequate retirement income;
— providing equitable access to a wide variety of training, education, and career options;
— enhancing entrepreneurial opportunities; and
— ensuring equal access to credit.

These strategies will ensure that women realize their potential and continue to make a positive and increasing contribution to the economies of British Columbia and Canada, at the same time fully enjoying the benefits of their contribution.

Economic Development

To ensure that women become equal partners in the economic future of British Columbia, priority will be given to:

— analyzing the impact of economic policies on women;
— increasing women's representation in key decision-making areas affecting the province's overall economic development.

Employment

To encourage and assist employers to hire and train women in a broader range of occupations, to maintain workplaces free from discrimination, and to encourage women to become entrepreneurs and employers in their own right. Priorities will include:

— increasing occupational diversification and improved job access;
— eliminating inappropriate wage disparities;
— eliminating systemic discrimination and sexual harassment;
— minimizing the negative impacts of technology;
— encouragement of innovative work arrangements; and,
— consideration of women in informal work arrangements.

Training

To increase training opportunities for women in British Columbia by:
— examining current practices of employers and training institutions;
— analyzing future needs;
— ensuring that women are offered equal access to all aspects of training.

It is recognized that a well-trained workforce is crucial to the future development of British Columbia.

Family

To provide a policy and program framework which works towards:
— elimination of family violence;
— enforcement of maintenance payments;
— improved access to legal services;
— family law reforms;
— provision of adequate housing;
— availability of counselling and crisis services; and
— availability of parenting skills training.

This framework will be consistent with sound family values and supportive of identified economic and social needs.

Health

To adapt the existing health care system to better serve the specific needs of women in British Columbia.

Among the areas of health care delivery which would benefit from on-going improvement are:

— medical protocols related to women's health care;
— drug and alcohol abuse treatment;
— medical and para-medical training;
— care of the elderly; and,
— better promotion of healthful living, e.g. nutrition and fitness counselling.

Education

To broaden the range of educational choices made available to women of all ages and to improve the quality and quantity of career counselling resources. Action will be taken to:

— ensure equitable access to education;
— eliminate any gender stereotyping in teaching; and
— provide a broader range of options during transition from school or home to work.

Women in the Public Service

To improve the representation of women in management, technical and non-traditional jobs within the public service by creating a working environment conducive to career advancement.

Women's Programs has a mandate to ensure that the British Columbia Government, as an employer, shows leadership in providing equal opportunities for its female employees.

This mandate can be effectively carried out by ensuring that personnel policies reflect a positive attitude toward career placement and advancement for women and that direct and systemic discrimination do not exist. Women's Programs will work with Government Personnel Services Division and all ministries to ensure that both policy and practice reflect the government's commitment to its female employees.